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IS 502 Vocation of Ministry

Reginald Johnson

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IS 502 ExL, The Vocation of Ministry (3 Hours)

Dates: Tuesday, September 2 - December 5, 2003 (Reading Week, November 25-29, "no class")

Professor: Reg Johnson, Ph.D.

Reg_Johnson@asburyseminary.edu

Office: 859-858-3081

Welcome to Vocation of Ministry! I am delighted to be your coach and instructor for this experience. You may be grounded in your life in Christ, with a strong sense of his Call and the implications of that call in the many different dimensions of your life. If this is the case, I hope that this class will be both a stimulus as well as a resource for you as you continue to deepen your understanding of your call, and to provide fresh resources as you explore further implications in your life. However, if you are one who is still seeking direction about "call" and vocation, you are welcome as well. What we do together in this class should help you get some clarity. All of us together—myself included—will be growing in our realization of what it means that we are no longer our own, but that we belong to Christ. As I indicated above, I see myself as a coach in this process. I will try to give you some good resources, provide support, and hold you accountable as well as we set out on this journey together.

First things first: "The development of this extended learning syllabus is intended for distribution to members of the course and others by my permission. It is not intended for general distribution on the internet. Permission to copy, in whole or in part, must be requested from the professor (Reg Johnson)."

A word before we begin: Although I've taught on the internet a few times, I always find that this experience always puts me outside my comfort zone! I have offered this particular course on ExL a couple of times, and I have made some changes, based on the helpful feedback that the students gave me. Each time I teach online I learn a little more, but I'm not perfect yet! Would you extend some grace to me as we learn together how to work in this medium? I'll look forward to your comments on the class. Let me know where I need to be clearer. Keep me posted about how the assignments are working and how your team discussions are going. If you run into any problems with all of this, please let me know.

Course Description

This course seeks to ask and address the question, "How is our vocation as those called to Christian ministry discerned, shaped, and sustained?" The purpose of this course is to explore from a Wesleyan perspective the biblical and theological foundations of Christian personhood and vocation by examining the nexus between call to ministry and formation of persons in ministry.

Course Objectives

Having successfully completed this course, you should:

1. Understand the nature of Christian vocation (including God's call of all Christian disciples to ministry in church and world) from a Wesleyan perspective;
2. Grasp the relationship between critical reasoning and spirituality and understand their importance for theological reflection on the vocation and practice of ministry;
3. Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and gender issues with regard to their importance for the vocation of ministry;
4. Understand the importance of moral formation and integrity for Christian ministry, with a clear understanding of boundary issues related to ethical conduct;
5. Demonstrate commitment to "the way" of the Christian disciple through immersion in the means of grace;
6. Be able to articulate a coherent narrative of one's own call into God's ministry; and
7. Project a curricular plan consistent with vocational discernment.

Mode of Instruction

This e-course is structured around required readings, video and audio presentations, e-team conferencing, "covenant" or "accountability" groups, personal engagement with "works of mercy" and "works of piety" that are basic to Wesleyan thought and practice and written assignments. Each Monday I will post detailed instructions for that week.

Course Requirements

1. E-Conferences (15%)

- 1.1 I will assign you to an e-team for conferencing.
- 1.2 Each week (normally) your e-team will discuss a reading reflection question (RRQ) as posted in the course folder.
- 1.3 Please limit each posting to 50 words or less [unless instructed to do otherwise].
- 1.4 E-conferencing calls for good "e-manners." Remember that your team members do not benefit from hearing your tone of voice or seeing your body language, SO BE CAREFUL HOW YOU PUT THINGS IN WRITING!!!! You may be perceived as shouting, when you only meant to add an emphasis.
- 1.5 I will monitor interaction and discussion of the assignments and grade your individual contribution to the overall discussion content as well as your

contribution to facilitating the group discussion process.

For example:

- a. Did you give a succinct, understandable statement that reflected how you understood the text content as it relates to the discussion question?
- b. Did you reflect critically on the interface between course content and personal experience?
- c. Did you post your own answers/responses in a timely way, so as to promote conversation among the members of your team?
- d. How effective were you in generating ideas/proposals for group interaction?
- e. How effective were you in your engagement with the ideas/proposals generated by others on your Team?
- f. Did you respond to your Teammates as per the instructions for the exercise?
- g. Did you attend to issues of form and style appropriate to formal writing?

1.6 Normally, at the conclusion of each week all postings to the Discussion Center will be moved to the Archives. I will remind you of the dates and times this will occur week-to-week.

2. Spiritual Formation Group or Covenant Discipleship Group Expectations (15%)

Because spiritual formation is an important part of this course, you will participate in a weekly or bi-weekly small group that provides opportunity for fellowship, sharing, and prayer. You will need to begin this commitment by the second week of class. If you are not currently in a group, you may start one on your own. Your group should have at least two other persons in it. If you are looking for a resource for this group, I recommend (not require) *A Spiritual Formation Workbook: A Renovare Resource for Spiritual Renewal*. ("Renovare" is a French word which means "to renew"). The publisher and ISBN for that book are listed below in the text section.

3. Commitment to Social Justice (10%)

A commitment to social justice is one of the emphases of the Wesleyan tradition. Each class member is expected to work for a minimum of 4 hours of service in the community. You may work in a mercy ministry that your church sponsors, or you may choose to volunteer to help in some other community service organization. For example, you can work for a soup kitchen, help out at a "Food Pantry," provide housekeeping or lawn care for a home-bound person, etc. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. You are to write a brief description of your service involvement describing one thing about the experience that stands out for you. This report need only be a short paragraph and is due on the

last official day of class.

In addition, by the conclusion of Module 3 you will have attended two services in a church(es) that is (are) ethnically different from you. This will be the basis for your reflection in your "In-Process" paper for Module 3. If you are currently worshipping in a cross-cultural setting (e.g., international students or other ethnic minority), contact me for ways in which you need to adjust this assignment.

4. "In-Process" Papers (60%)

You will prepare four, five-page "in-process" papers that integrate course content, your understanding of your vocation of ministry, and assessment surveys where appropriate. These you will send to my electronic office (IS502RJ Office) as an attached document.

4.1 Papers must conform to MLA form and style according to Slade [available in the ATS bookstore and in the library].

4.2 I will grade all submitted work and will seek to return your papers to you in a timely fashion, normally within one week of its submission. When assignment "B" builds on assignment "A," assignment "A" will be returned before assignment "B" falls due.

4.3 All written work is due by 12:00 Noon (ET) on the due date.

4.4 A 1/3 deduction in grade will be assessed for every 24-hour period that your paper is late. Late papers receive a grade, but no written feedback. If you need to negotiate an alternate due date with me, please discuss this with me BEFORE the assignment is due.

5. Required Reading

Required Texts

Chilcotte, Paul *John Wesley Speaks on Christian Vocation*

Grenz, S. & Bell, R. (1995). *Betrayal of Trust: Sexual Misconduct in the Pastorate*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Guinness, O. (1998). *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*. Waco, TX: Word.

Sire, James W. (2000) *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as Christian Calling*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Smith, G. (1997). *Listening to God in Times of Choice*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

In addition, there will be occasional articles included in a module that will be required reading as well.

Recommended resource for "spiritual formation group" requirement

Smith, J. B. & Graybeal, L. (1991). *A Spiritual Formation Workbook: Small-group Resources for Nurturing Christian Growth*. San Francisco: Harper.

Grading Policy

Asbury Seminary defines grades using the following criteria (catalog, p. 24):

A= Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives

B= Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives

C= Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives

D= Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives

F= Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

A plus (+) or minus (-) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C- = slightly below acceptable, etc.).

Incomplete Policy

A grade of "I" denotes course work has not been completed due to an unavoidable emergency, which does not include failure to turn in course work or attending to church work or other employment. See the Asbury Seminary Catalog for further clarification.

Support Services

For technical difficulties with FirstClass, contact Jared Porter, ExL Support, at ExL_Support@asburyseminary.edu

For general concerns, questions, or problems with email
Extended_Learning@asburyseminary.edu or contact Kevin Osborn at
ExL_Director@asburyseminary.edu

ATS Bookstore's new toll-free number: 1-866-855-8252 or the local number, 858-2293

For library assistance contact Hannah_Kirsch@asburyseminary.edu (via ISP) or <Hannah Kirsch> (via First Calss), 859-858-2189.

Course Outline and Learning Goals

Module 1: Understanding the Nature of Christian Vocation from a Wesleyan Perspective

At the completion of module 1, you will be able to:

1. Integrate your sense of what God desires with certain areas of your personal

giftedness;

2. Discuss the relationship between personal responsibility and choice in how you respond to a perceived call of God;
3. Articulate how God is moving in your life regarding your vocation by using the aspects of vocation based on the Wesleyan quadrilateral.

Module 2: Grasp the relationship between critical reasoning and spirituality and understand their importance for theological reflection on the vocation and practice of ministry

At the completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Articulate your own decision making process and the relative weight you give to critical thinking, spirituality, and theological reflection in your e-conference groups and in your writing.
2. Demonstrate your understanding of the roles of critical reasoning, theological reflection, and spirituality on your call to ministry.

Module 3: Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and gender issues with regard to their importance for the vocation of ministry.

At the completion of this module, you will be able to:

1. Describe key issues and problems, which affect ethnic minorities and their leadership;
2. Explain the reality of racism and gender issues, their origins and the negative impact they have on building the Kingdom of God;
3. Discuss how racism affects inter-ethnic and inter-church relations and how to effectively minister in such contexts.

Module 4: Understand the importance of moral formation and integrity for Christian ministry, with a clear understanding of boundary issues related to ethical conduct.

By the completion of the module, you will be able to:

1. Discuss the importance of the character of and the maintenance of a sense of wholeness by a Christian minister;
2. Identify ways to maintain emotional and physical boundaries with people;
3. Identify ways in which boundary violations occur;
4. Explain the relationship between moral formation, individual integrity, and the vocation of ministry.

Online (Collaborative Classroom) Communication Guidelines

The Collaborative Classroom is built upon the First Class Client platform that Asbury Seminary uses for its e-mail and intranet systems. An "IS502" folder will be loaded on your Desktop within First Class and within this folder you will be able to collaborate with participant-colleagues and me throughout the course. The following are functions with which you should familiarize yourself:

1. The Course Center will contain a copy of the syllabus as well as any other materials I may choose to post for the entire class to access.
2. The Discussion Center will be used for all public communications. This page is opened automatically when you access the icon "IS 502X-RJ." Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the schedule, the assignments, or anything else that may be of interest to other participants and me you should post it to the Discussion Center. You will also post all of your entire-class (versus team) discussion responses here. Normally these will be organized around threaded discussions. In a threaded discussion, your comment builds on the comments of those who preceded you. You might think of a threaded discussion as a file drawer in which all the comments are organized sequentially so that you can follow the flow of conversation. Each new question or posting begins a different threaded discussion.
3. Your work with your e-team will be done within the Team Folder. Any intra-team discussions will take place here, in contrast to the Discussion Center that is for the entire class.
4. The IS502X Office is for private correspondence between you and me. This will contain items that you do not want to appear publicly to all your classmates or items that you think may embarrass me if they were to appear publicly. It is also the place where you will send your assignments as attached files.
5. The Archives Center will be used for storing correspondence that has already been explored during the course of the semester. This keeps the Discussion Center from becoming too unwieldy.
6. The Chat Center is intended primarily for real-time interaction among participants. You can get together with other members to study, ask questions, or to explore topics. None of the conversations carried on in this location are ever saved.
7. The Prayer Room is where we will share with the class experiences of God's presence in our lives, prayer requests and praise reports.
8. The Resource Center provides access to a number of specific tools available to all ExL and DMIN students. Usually, these include access to the B.L. Fisher Library, the services in Estes Chapel, ExL Updates, "Guidelines for

Success,” Helpful Hints, Interesting Links, a PowerPoint Viewer, as well as a Real Audio player. I encourage you to explore these resources, and particularly to utilize the chapel access in order to connect with the seminary’s on-campus opportunities for spiritual growth.